

c. **Amendments to Claims**

1. (currently amended) A process for preparing optical fiber, comprising the steps step of:

drawing fiber from a preform comprising a silica body, and
5 forming the body formed by a process including the step of, prior to sintering the body, treating the body at a temperature in the range of ranging from 300 to 900°C with a gaseous mixture comprising one or more non-oxygenated sulfur halides, and
wherein the one or more sulfur halides are generated by reaction of sulfur present in the body with halides flowed over the body.

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2. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the body is selected from an overcladding tube and a substrate tube.

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3. (original) The process of claim 2, wherein the body is formed by a sol-gel process.

4. (currently amended) The process of claim 1, wherein the temperature of treatment is in the range of ranges from 400 to 800°C.

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5. (currently amended) The process of claim 4, wherein the temperature of treatment is in the range of ranges from 600 to 700°C.

6. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the treatment is performed for a period of at least one hour.

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7. (original) The process of claim 6, wherein the treatment is performed for a period of at least two hours.

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8. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the one or more sulfur halides comprise one or more sulfur chlorides.

9. (original) The process of claim 8, wherein the one or more sulfur chlorides comprise at least one of sulfur monochloride and sulfur dichloride.

10. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the gaseous mixture further
5 comprises at least one of nitrogen, air, helium, neon, and argon.

11. (canceled)

12. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the treatment performs at least one
10 of: reducing the size of at least a portion of refractory metal oxide particles in the body
and reducing the concentration of refractory metal oxide particles in the body.

13. (original) The process of claim 12, wherein the particles include at least one of
chromia and zirconia.

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14. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the treatment reduces the
concentration of water and hydroxyl groups in the body.

16. (original) The process of claim 15, wherein the gaseous mixture comprises 0.1
20 to 100 vol.% of the one or more sulfur halides.

17. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the body is subjected to a treatment
with a gas comprising chlorine prior to the treatment with the one or more sulfur halides.

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18. (original) The process of claim 17, wherein the gaseous mixture comprising
one or more sulfur halides comprises about 1 to about 2 vol.% of the one or more sulfur
halides.

19. (original) The process of claim 17, wherein the chlorine treatment reduces the concentration of water and hydroxyl groups in the body.

20. (previously presented) The process of claim 17, wherein the chlorine treatment performs at least one of: reducing the size of at least a portion of chromia particles in the body and reducing the concentration of chromia particles in the body.

21. (original) The process of claim 1, wherein the body is subjected to treatment with a gas comprising oxygen subsequent to the treatment with the one or more sulfur halides.

22. (currently amended) A process for preparing optical fiber, comprising the steps step of:

15 drawing fiber from a preform comprising a sol-gel silica tube, and
forming the tube formed by a process including the step of, prior to sintering the tube, treating the tube at a temperature in the range of ranging from 300 to 900°C with a gaseous mixture comprising one or more non-oxygenated sulfur chlorides, and
wherein the one or more sulfur chlorides are generated by reaction of sulfur present in the tube with chlorine flowed over the tube.

20 23. (currently amended) The process of claim 22, wherein the temperature of treatment is in the range of ranges from 400 to 800°C.

24. (currently amended) The process of claim 23, wherein the temperature of treatment is in the range of ranges from about 600 to about 700°C.

25 25. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the treatment is performed for a period of at least two hours.

30 26. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the one or more sulfur chlorides comprise at least one of sulfur monochloride and sulfur dichloride

27. (canceled)

28. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the treatment performs at least one
5 of: reducing the size of at least a portion of refractory metal oxide particles in the tube
and reducing the concentration of refractory metal oxide particles in the tube.

29. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the gaseous mixture comprises 0.1
to 100 vol.% of the one or more sulfur chlorides.

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30. (original) The process of claim 29, wherein the gaseous mixture comprises
about 6 to about 7 vol.% of the one or more sulfur chlorides.

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31. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the tube is subjected to a treatment
with a gas comprising chlorine prior to the treatment with the one or more sulfur
chlorides.

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32. (original) The process of claim 22, wherein the tube is subjected to treatment
with a gas comprising oxygen subsequent to the treatment with the one or more sulfur
chlorides.

33. (previously presented) The process of claim 22, where the tube is selected
from an overcladding tube and a substrate tube.

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34. (currently amended) A process for preparing optical fiber, comprising the
steps step of:
drawing fiber from a preform comprising a sol-gel silica tube, and
forming the tube formed by a process including the steps of, prior to sintering the tube:
providing a silica dispersion,
30 forming from the dispersion a gelled tube comprising refractory metal oxide
particles,

heating the entire gelled tube to a temperature in the range of ranging from 400 to 800°C and,

5 while the gelled tube is at the temperature, treating the gelled tube with a gaseous mixture comprising one or more non-oxygenated sulfur halides, the treatment performed for a time period that provides sufficient diffusion of the one or more sulfur halides into the gelled tube such that at least one effect selected from the group consisting of reducing the size of at least a portion of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube and reducing the concentration of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube, is achieved.

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35. (currently amended) The process of claim 34, wherein the temperature of treatment is in the range of ranges from 600 to 700°C.

15 36. (previously presented) The process of claim 34, wherein the time period is at least two hours.

37. (previously presented) The process of claim 34, wherein the one or more sulfur halides comprises one or more sulfur chlorides.

20 38. (previously presented) The process of claim 37, wherein the one or more sulfur chlorides comprise at least one compound selected from the group consisting of sulfur monochloride and sulfur dichloride.

25 39. (previously presented) The process of claim 34, wherein the treatment reduces the size of at least a portion of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube, reduces the concentration of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube, or both reduces the size of at least a portion of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube and reduces the concentration of the refractory metal oxide particles in the gelled tube.

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40. (canceled)

41. (previously presented) The process of claim 37, wherein the gaseous mixture comprises about 6 to about 7 vol.% of the one or more sulfur chlorides.

5 42. (previously presented) The process of claim 34, wherein the gelled tube includes chromia particles, wherein the gelled tube is subjected to a treatment with chlorine gas prior to the treatment with the one or more sulfur halides, and wherein the chlorine gas treatment performs at least one action selected from the group consisting of reducing the size of at least a portion of the chromia particles in the gelled tube and
10 reducing the concentration of the chromia particles in the gelled tube.

43. (canceled)

15 44. (previously presented) The process of claim 34, wherein the tube is an overcladding tube or a substrate tube.